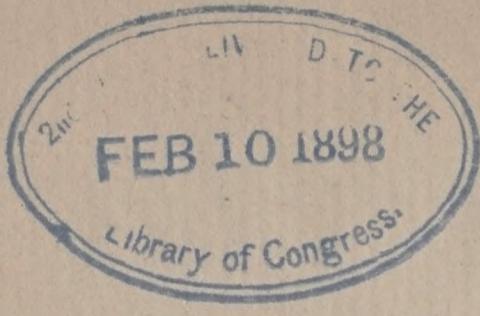


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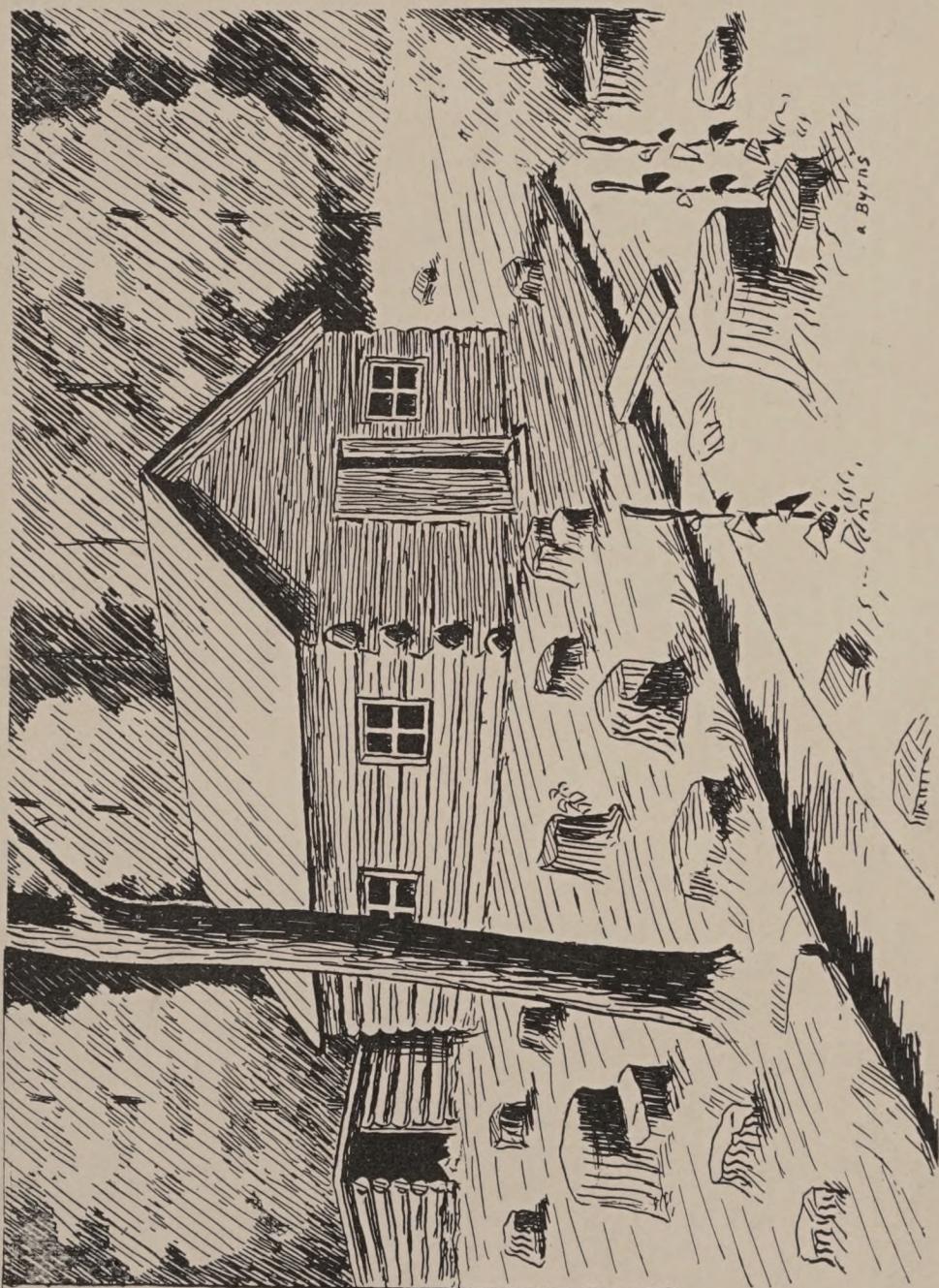
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MAXTONE'S POINT SCHOOL-HOUSE.

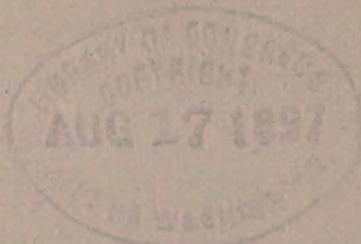
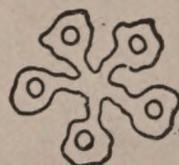
OLIVER   

AND HIS

   FRIENDS

By —————

DAVID WILLSON ANDERSON



Terre Haute, Ind.

The Inland Publishing Company

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PREFATORY NOTE

On presenting this little book to the public, it becomes my most pleasant duty to tender my warmest thanks to Mrs. Emma Mont. McRae, of Purdue University, for kindly suggestions; to Arthur Byrns, of LaFayette, Indiana, and B. F. McCutcheon, of Chicago, for making the illustrations; and to Miss Evaleen Stein, of LaFayette, Indiana, for preparing the cover design.

“Oliver and His Friends” is sent out into the world to do good and give pleasure. It is designed to inspire in those who read it an unflinching loyalty to the good, the beautiful, the true; to show the mild, mighty power of kindness; to teach the resistless influence of true manliness. That it may accomplish this precious mission is the fond wish of

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION

In the study of a normal boy may be found in epitome the possibilities of the race. As his tendencies, his aspirations, his struggles are discovered, it becomes more possible to measure the meaning of life.

In a new community, opportunity exists for the play of the finer sentiments. Life is full of hardships for the boy as well as the man. The amenities of life take on even a higher significance than when associations have become so conventionalized as to lose something of the ingenuousness of the untutored goodness of heart.

Oliver and his friends come to us as a group of real boys and girls having both strength and weakness. There is a wholesomeness and manliness about the hero which will make right-minded boys and girls his friends. He is a boy with a mission without knowing it. He does not feel that the whole world depends upon him for its happiness, yet he does his full share toward making his part of it a garden spot bearing rare blossoms of kindness and goodness.

The boy, the teacher, the parent who follows the story of "Oliver and His Friends" will have a truer view of the diviner things that may come into all lives.

EMMA MONT. MCRAE.

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OLIVER AND HIS FRIENDS

CHAPTER I

A GAME OF TIGER

One Autumn morning about fifty years ago, when the trees were putting on their robes of purple and gold, a boy carrying a turtle in his hand slyly came out of the bushes which fringed the yard of the rude school-house at Maxtone's Point and approached the door. The path by which the boy approached wound from side to side to miss the stumps, of which there were many in the yard. The squirming turtle was hidden under the boy's coat as he peered into the school-house through a crevice between the logs. Sure enough, no one was inside; so he raised the wood-

en latch, went in and put the turtle into a part of the teacher's desk which contained the copy-books of the pupils and was closed by a small door. This done he slipped away, thinking, no doubt, what fun there would be when the master should discover the trick and feeling sure that no one had seen him. As he will have much to do with the history of this school, a word about him will not be out of place.

Timothy Snideby was the evil genius of the Maxtone's Point school. Cunning and smart, no one could get a lesson quicker than he—if he tried. He was always ready for any mischief if he could see a way to avoid evil consequences to himself. It made little difference to him who bore the blame so long as he was safe. Singularly enough, for the first three or four weeks of school under a new teacher, he would be a favorite. So teachers were always slow to fix blame upon him at first. He never caused trouble by fighting with his playmates. Such boys do not fight, though they often cause others to do so.

After he had done the sneaking act—no manly boy will do things behind one's back which he is afraid to do before one's face—and had again passed into the wood, he thought himself safe from discovery. He could not know that a pair of honest blue eyes saw his approach, saw the turtle in his hand and correctly guessed the rest.

But here comes the master, his vigorous step striking the beaded dew from its delicate hold on grass-blade and flower-stem. Andrew Sumley was teaching his first term at Maxtone's Point though he had had considerable experience in other schools. Maxtone's Point was a little village situated a few miles above the mouth of White River, a beautiful stream of Indiana. The small steam-boats for which



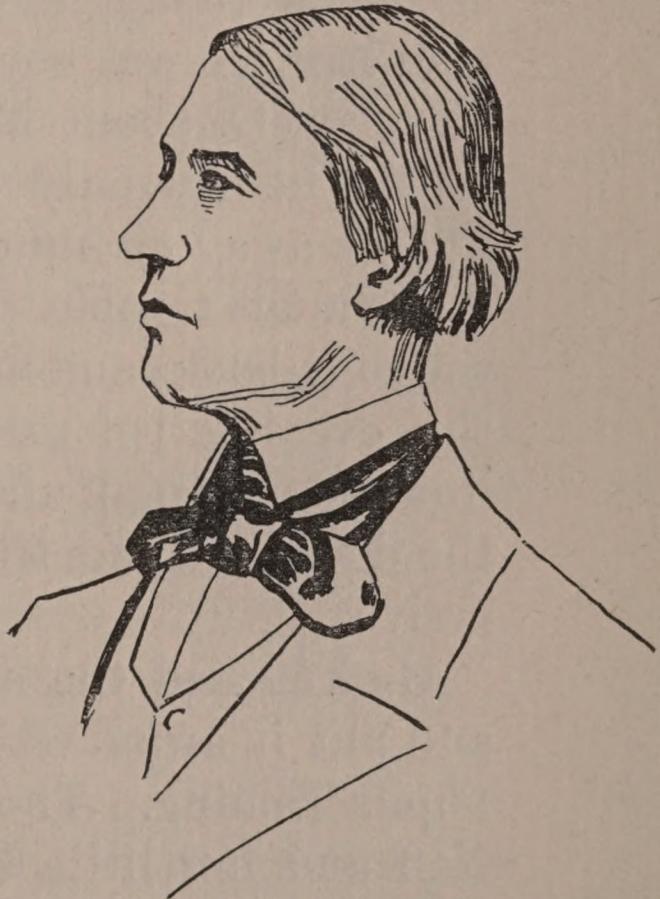
TIM.

the river was navigable to that point sometimes stopped at the village landing for purposes of traffic, but with this exception, the people of the village had little communication with the outside world. The spirit of progress came tardy to Maxtone's Point and met a cold reception when it came. All the houses of the village were rude and uninviting; the school-house was the most rude and uninviting of them all. It stood on an out-of-the-way spot of ground, an outcast from among its straggling companions. A shallow branch struggled for existence in front, another clamored for notice at the rear. They joined their waters a short distance south of the house and went tumbling away to fulfill their part in carrying the commerce of the great river. Foolish little rivulet, so impatient to exchange its play-life in the cool shade for work-life on the wide, unknown river! The school-house fronted west. The little point on the south, formed by the joining of the two branches, made part of the play-ground. On the north, the play-

ground was continuous with a great wood which extended many miles among the hills.

When Mr. Sumley reached the door, he threw it wide open and left it so after he had entered. The morning was pleasant so he did not build a fire in the great, wide fire-place at the back of the room but opened the queer little windows and dusted the rough seats.

Strict though the master certainly was, unkind and pettishly cross he was not. With no toleration for littleness, meanness or trickery, he was ready to acknowledge nobleness and manliness. Like many another of his profession, his anger often mastered his reason, and then, of course, he was liable to make



MR. SUMLEY.

very grievous mistakes. Tall, spare built, with sandy hair, smooth face, gray eyes and stooping shoulders, he was by no means a pleasing personage to look upon; and yet you couldn't help thinking that he would be a good man to have for a friend.

His school was not very large, not very hard to govern, not very hard to teach as schools were taught in those days. His countenance was cheerful, his step light as he went about his morning's work. Ah! if he had only known of the turtle hidden away in his desk, he might have saved much trouble. He had looked over the copy-books and had "set the copies" the evening before, and, when he had finished sweeping and dusting, he sat by the door to smoke till the pupils should arrive.

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe and put it away when he saw the first pupils coming. They were little Nellie Neff and her little brother Joe. Nellie crossed the branch on the plank, but Joe, to be a brave boy, waded. Nellie return-

ed the master's greeting in so sweet a voice and with so cheerful a look that, had he been sad, his sadness must have flown away. Joe returned the greeting with a very, very low voice while his eyes were fastened on the floor.

Mr. Sumley was looking over some problems at his desk when he felt a touch on his arm and a sweet voice said, "Here is an apple I brought you, teacher."

It was Nellie.

Her voice was so pleasant and her smile so sweet that the master forgot to tell her she ought to say *brought* instead of *brung*. Besides she had already gone to play with some other girls who had by this time gathered.

Surely, if Timothy Snideby was the evil genius of the school, Nellie Neff was the good angel. She was a real sunbeam



to Andrew Sumley. To look at him—big, strong, rough-appearing man that he was—and to remember how much he had drifted about the world, one would not think he cared anything about the smiles and tender words of children. But he did. It made him, all unconsciously to himself, perhaps, a much better and more refined man. *How much good it is the opportunity of even children to do!*

“Good morning, teacher,” said a big, good-humored voice at the door. Looking, Mr. Sumley saw Thomas James Niggins. The master smiled as he saw the good-natured face thrust in at the door as if the boy had not time to come in. This was his way, however. He never did things as other people. He always did what folks did not expect him to do, sometimes ludicrous things and sometimes things that proved him a genius. He was sometimes laughed at and often warmly praised. Large, over-grown, warm-hearted, not easily angered, no one had more friends than this boy with the queer name—Thomas James Niggins.

This was not what his playmates called him, for they had taken the liberty of shortening his name to suit their fancy. When he appeared on the play-ground, he did not think of being called anything else than Tom Jim Nig, or simply, Nig, as he had been called since he first started to school. Notwithstanding his open-hearted, odd disposition, he was the most daring and fearless boy of the school. His appearance on the play-ground was therefore welcomed with pleasure.

When he appeared among the boys, a game which probably never had any name was in progress. It was played as follows: A large tree-top lay where it had fallen when the men had taken the trunk for lumber. In falling, this tree



had bent down several smaller trees, which, with its own large branches, some of them high in the air, formed a very maze of limbs. It was in this tree-top that the boys were playing. Some of them were playing that they were men trying to escape from various wild and ferocious beasts, such as "tigers" and "bears," whose parts were played by two or three of the most active boys. Nig was a famous "tiger," but coming after the game was started, he played "a man." Should "a man" be so unfortunate as to be caught he was immediately dragged away to the "tiger's den" and "eat up." But, curiously enough, this did not seem to hurt him much, for, like the warriors in the Hall of Odin, he always came to life again.

"Come on," called Nig. "I'm not afeared of all the tigers in the woods."

As he sprang into the tree-top, two "tigers" followed him, pressing him so closely that he found all he could do to keep out of their way.

There was one pass where a very high,

long limb of the tree-top had caught the limb of another tree in such a manner that one could, if he were active enough, climb the limb of the fallen tree, pass to the limb of the standing tree and thence to the ground. This was a very dangerous pass and none of the boys except Nig had ever attempted it. Being so closely pressed now, Nig was compelled to take the dangerous pass or get caught.

The two “tigers” who were so closely pressing Nig were Oliver Robertaine, a handsome, blue-eyed boy of twelve, and Tony Neggits, a boy from one of those singularly poor and shiftless families often to be met with in the society of that day. They were of a class who never cared to provide anything for the morrow, never made much advancement, loved the past, found fault with the present, ignored the future. Such people are sometimes daring because they cannot count the cost. Tony was about the age of Oliver, dull, generous, a little too fat to climb well but afraid of being called a coward.

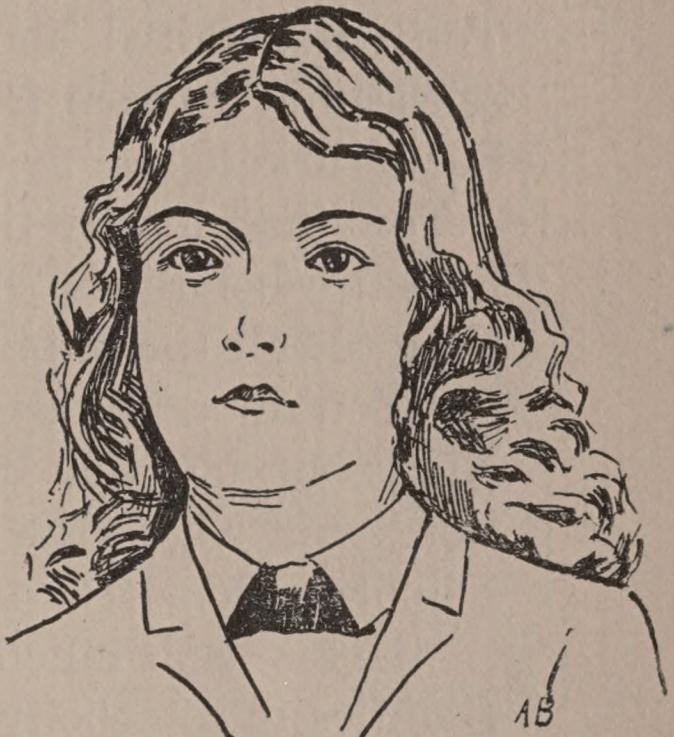
When Nig reached the dangerous pass,

the two "tigers" drew back. The rest of the boys then began to urge them on. The taunts and urgings of the other boys had no effect on Oliver, but Tony pressed on. Nig crossed easily to a place of safety but Tony did not fare so well. The eyes of every boy were fixed upon him as he slowly crawled out on the single, slender limb. The other players stopped and all became silent. Hearing everything so still, Tony looked down. It was a fatal mistake. He started to fall but clung to the limb, turning on it till his head hung down. He would have been dashed to the ground at once but the knee of his stout trousers caught on a sharp knot and held him suspended in the air, powerless to help himself. The boys on the ground were struck with fear, while Tony himself was crying with fright. The girls left their game of "skipping the rope" and gathered around. Their cries added to the confusion.

"Get me the girls' jumping rope and we can get him down easily enough," said some one, calmly. Turning, the pupils

saw Oliver Robertaine, his coat thrown off, quietly removing his shoes. In their excitement the boys forgot that he was the one who had refused to go upon the dangerous pass a few minutes before, with all their urging. Taking the rope with him, Oliver began his daring climb.

"If you don't stop kicking about so much you will break the limb, Tony," called Oliver, as he felt the limb shaking with Tony's violent efforts to regain a hold with his hands. Poor Tony was almost black in the face with hanging so long head downward. Making a loop in the rope, Oliver dropped it down from the dangerous height to which he had climbed with great care and coolness, and Tony put it around his body under the arms. Oliver then



OLIVER.

passed the rope up over the limb and dropped the loose end to the ground. Nig and another boy pulled on the rope until Tony was raised enough for Oliver to release his trousers from the knot, when he was lowered safely to the ground.

Tony had hardly time to recover from his scare before the small hand-bell was rung to call the pupils to school.

“ You’re a plumb brick, Oliver, and Nig is one boy that’ll stand by you after this,” said Nig as the boys walked to the school-house.

“ O, it wasn’t much trouble to do what I did, and somebody had to do it,” said Oliver.

“ I’m sorry I teased you when you started to school. I guess, when it comes to the pinch, you’ve got as much grit as any of us,” said Nig.

Tears came into Oliver’s eyes at these generous words. That you may know why, it will be necessary to tell something about him as he walks toward the house.

A few months before, an old man, gray and somewhat bent with age, accom-

panied by a handsome, blue-eyed boy of twelve, left the little steamer at Maxtone's Point and took up his residence in a small house on the bank of the river, near the village. There was about the old man a look of lofty pride. There was something high-born and noble in his face, too, that commanded the respect of all who saw him. He looked to be a man who would willingly die rather than ask or receive charity. And the boy by his side, what a fine, beautiful look he had and how proud his step! He looked as if he might have been used to far other surroundings than such as he was likely to find at this humble village. The boy was Oliver. The proud, fine-looking, old gentleman was his grandfather, Godfrey Robertaine. No one was able to learn anything of the past history of Oliver and his grandfather. They associated but little with the people of the neighborhood. When Oliver came to school, the boys, thinking him proud and, as they termed it, "stuck up," made it very unpleasant for him. The boys were right in thinking Oliver proud. He was

proud, but it was that kind of pride which every boy and girl should have—the kind that keeps people from being, in any way, connected with anything disgraceful or dishonorable. There is a difference between pride and vanity.

Everyone likes to have the good will and respect of his associates. For this reason, the taunts and persecutions of his schoolmates had borne heavily on Oliver. His high spirit disdained to show that he suffered, however. Now, when Nig voluntarily complimented him, in his rough way, and declared himself his friend, he knew that he had at least one companion who appreciated him. Nig's brusque and boyish expression of admiration for Oliver's courage caused the noble boy to show more feeling than all the persecutions of his schoolmates had succeeded in wringing from him.

CHAPTER II

A STRANGE SCHOOL VISITOR

Mr. Sumley seemed to be in an unusually pleasant frame of mind and the school, on the morning of Tony's misfortune, moved pleasantly along. To hear what good lessons Timothy Snideby had, to see how well he behaved in the presence of the master, one would scarcely have believed him guilty of the act of the morning. There was one blue-eyed boy, however, who wondered many a time that day what would happen when the hour for writing should come.

Writing was the last exercise before the afternoon recess. At last, "Get ready for writing," the master said, as he opened the door of the desk in readiness to get the copy-books. Just then a little girl's hand went up. She wanted her pen mended. The master was mending the

pen when suddenly a dead silence fell upon the school, to be broken immediately by such laughing and screaming as proved that "something had happened." Looking in the direction in which every eye in the room was turned, the master, of course, saw Timothy's turtle which had crawled out of his prison when the door was opened.

"Will some boy take that thing out?" said Mr. Sumley, in an ominous voice.

"I will," said Nig.

While Nig was removing the turtle, no one dared smile, for the master, as Nellie afterwards said, "just looked awful." In truth his face did look "awful," for anger flashed from his gray eyes, glowed in his flushed cheeks, and trembled in his hands.

"This is my first trouble in this school," he said, "and if I find the boy who did it, he will not wish to do such a mean, sneaking, contemptible trick again the rest of his life. I had hoped you were all gentlemen, but I find that at least one of you is not. Only a coward would do

such a trick to a teacher who has been as kind as I have. Such a boy does not deserve a school to go to, and if I find him out he will wish he had never come. If any one knows anything about this matter, I want him to tell me. Does any one know who did this cowardly trick?"

No one moved or spoke.

"Then I will question you one at a time, and, mind you, let me hear the truth or it will be so much worse for you."

The first boy called was the carpenter's son; a little fellow with a very freckled face and slender limbs, who always seemed to be in somebody's way.

"Lemmy Nix," called out the master in such a terrible voice that the boy with freckles got up quicker than he had ever been known, in all his life, to get out of anybody's way, "do you know anything about who brought that turtle to the school?"

"No, sir, I don't."

"Lemmy, are you telling me the truth?"

"Yes, sir, I wouldn't tell you nothin' else."

Poor little Lemmy was all “broken up,” and began to sob. The master excused him.

“Antony Neggits.”

Tony stood up.

“Do you know anything about who put that turtle in my desk?”

“No, sir, I don’t know nothin’ about it.”

He was excused.

“Timothy Snideby.”

Trembling, but looking as innocent as he could, Timothy arose.

“Do you know anything about who put that turtle in my desk?”

“No, sir,” answered Timothy with great coolness for so young a rogue. But one boy in the room turned his honest blue eyes upon him and wondered that such a falsehood did not almost blister the tongue that uttered it.

“Nellie Neff.”

Poor Nellie! The master had never spoken in such an “awful” voice to her before. The tender-hearted child burst into tears. Mr. Sumley saw that he had

hurt her feelings and the sight of such a little sunbeam in tears had the happy effect of greatly reducing his anger. He spoke to her in a much kinder voice.

“Nellie, my child, do you know anything of this affair?”

She, of course, answered that she did not.

In this manner the personal examination of the fifteen or twenty pupils went on. Each one professed ignorance of the affair. From the time of speaking to Nellie, however, the master lost much of his anger. He became much more reasonable. Such is the sweet influence of even a child whose life is ruled by a gentle, kindly spirit.

“Oliver Robertaine,” called the master. Oliver was the very last one to be examined. When he heard his name called, he arose. His heart beat faster and louder than usual but he resolved to tell the truth.

“Do you know anything about this disagreeable affair, Oliver?”

To the great surprise of both master and

pupils and the positive fear of Timothy, he answered, "Yes, sir, I do."

"Well, I'm glad we have found some one, at last, who knows about it. I had begun to think the turtle came here of his own accord."

Mr. Sumley was not now minded to be severe on Oliver. He had not so much as even suspected Timothy, nor had he particularly suspected any one. He began to think that Oliver had done the trick and that the honesty of his nature would not permit him to deny it when questioned in this direct way. He resolved to be very lenient with him if he confessed. He now resumed his questions.

"So you know who did this trick?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Who was it?"

"Mr. Sumley, I cannot tell."

"You know and you can't tell! Well, I've taught school for six years and I never yet found a boy who knew anything he couldn't tell."

Mr. Sumley was growing angry again.

“Did you do it yourself?” he asked severely.

“No, sir, I did not.”

“You did not do it yourself and you will not tell who did? Boy, I will bear no trifling. You *must* tell.” The master picked up one of the stout switches to be found in nearly every school of that day.

“Mr. Sumley, my grandfather has always told me that it is wrong to tell on a schoolmate (Timothy began to feel easier) and I must not tell.”

“Your grandfather, I would have you know, is not teaching this school. I have more than half a notion to whip you till you’re glad to tell. I don’t think it wrong to tell on a playmate or anybody else, no matter what your grandfather thinks. I will not whip you now, however, but you shall not go upon the playground any more until you tell who did this trick or we find out in some other way.”

Without a word, a tear, even a look that betrayed the deep sense of wrong he felt, Oliver sat down. The conviction that he had been misunderstood and wronged was

not the only pang he felt. He was keenly sensitive to his punishment. Never before had he been punished at school, so, this punishment fell with double force upon him. But he felt that he had done right and the thought made his trouble more easily borne. While it may be one thing to betray a schoolmate who has given you his confidence but quite another matter to inform on one whom you have found out independently, Oliver saw no difference. Then, Timothy Snideby, of all the boys at school, had most annoyed him. It seemed to Oliver that, had he exposed Timothy, it would have been taking a mean advantage. His high spirit disdained such a thing. With a heavy heart, he walked home that evening. On the way, he saw some one ahead of him walking very slowly. As he came closer he found that it was Nellie, who, plainly enough, was loitering that she might be overtaken.

“ You are not in a very great hurry this evening, Nellie,” said Oliver, as he reached the little girl’s side.

“Oliver, I’m sorry you have to stay in, and I don’t believe you ever brought that awful, old turtle into the school-house.”

Ten-year-old Nellie had the quick sympathy belonging to more mature years. The boy who had, without a murmur, borne punishment from the master, ill treatment from the boys and had been misunderstood by all, was touched.

“I’m glad you do not think I am as bad as everybody else thinks I am. I’m glad you are a friend to me. Nobody else but my grandfather cares for me.”

“Tony don’t think you did it, neither does Nig. I heard them say so as I came past Mr. Niggins’ gate this evening.”

“Nellie, you don’t know how much better you make me feel. There are more who care for me than I thought. It is a terrible thing to think no one cares for you.”

“Nig cares for you and Tony cares for you and I care for you. And, Oliver, God cares for you. You must not forget Him. You must not be sad any more.”

The two children were now before Mr. Neff’s gate. Without more words, Nellie

lifted up her little baby brother who had “toddled” out to meet her and carried him into the house. Oliver walked thoughtfully away. The disgrace of being punished at school weighed heavily upon him. He especially dreaded having his grandfather hear of it for he knew it would give the kind old man much pain.

When he reached his grandfather’s cottage he found him, as usual, at the gate where he had come to meet “his boy.”

Godfrey Robertaine had seen much sorrow and disappointment in his long life of three-score and ten years. Yet, the high-bred, fine face still retained its look of lofty pride. Such a man living in such surroundings caused much curiosity among his humble neighbors, but no one was sufficiently intimate with him to inquire about the past. The few who had tried to “scrape an acquaintance” were treated with lofty courtesy. Before such dignity of manner, none presumed to ask questions. He never was seen to work, seeming to have means

amply sufficient for his humble wants. He seemed a man who desired to forget and be forgotten.

As Oliver approached, his grandfather saw that something had gone wrong but he asked no questions, trusting to the manly nature of the boy to tell him all he ought to know. The meeting between them was such as might be expected between persons who had no one else in all the world to love.

As they stood at the gate, a view quite beautiful spread before them. The hills with their gorgeous robes of early autumn, the placid river with now and then a boat and the golden beams of the setting sun on its bosom, formed a picture not without its attractions.

“A pretty landscape, Oliver,” said the grandfather calling attention to the glorious view by a sweep of the arm.

“I can’t think this very beautiful, grandpa. When I look at the trees with their beautiful leaves it makes me think of the great old house, the quiet street, the beautiful grove of magnolias and—”

“Stop, my child, stop. Don’t tell over the old scenes now. God knows they are before my eyes night and day. Those loved scenes are dead to us, Oliver, my boy. We shall never again see the grand old house, the quiet street, the magnolias. They are dead to us like —,” the old man’s voice broke. Taking the boy’s hand in his own, the white-haired man, the golden-haired boy, carried their grief into the cottage, to live a while with the fond memories of the past.

This strange household had but one member besides Oliver and his grandfather. This was an old servant—a colored man—called Uncle Ag. His full name was Agamemnon Idlefield. Doubtless, he had not the remotest idea who the real Agamemnon was, whose name he bore. His name was due to a custom long observed of giving colored children high-sounding names. Uncle Ag must not be thought of as an entirely ignorant, rough man, however, for he had spent all his life as the immediate body-servant of Godfrey Robertaine. As a result, he had acquired

a refinement of thought and manner not always met with in persons in his condition. He was another of the mysteries which seemed to the Maxtone's Point people to hang over the Robertaine cottage.

The evening meal over, the three were sitting about the lamp. The grandfather was reading one of the many books which curiously enough were to be found there when Oliver's hand was laid on his shoulder.

“Grandpa.”

“Well, my boy.”

“I am going to tell you something that will make you feel very sad.”

“My child, I have seen much sorrow in my life. I will not shun it now. Tell me what you wish. You speak to your best earthly friend.”

“Grandpa, I was punished to-day at school.”

Uncle Ag started from his chair. A look of deep pain crossed the fine face of the grandfather and, drawing Oliver near him, his nervous hand on the bright hair, —the wavy, beautiful hair which the old

man loved so well that he had never allowed a single lock cut away—he anxiously asked:

“ You did not do anything dishonorable or unmanly, Oliver? Tell me that. It is all I need to know.”

“ ’Deed, chile, tell ole grandfather an’ ole Uncle Ag dat. Can stan’ anything else. Can’t stan’ dat, nohow.” This from the old servant.

“ I will tell you all the story,” said the boy. He then told the incidents which had taken place at school that day.

Uncle Ag settled back in his chair, his old face expressing the satisfaction he felt. The grandfather’s face wore a look of proud pleasure.

“ You feared to make me sad, my noble boy,” he said, “ but you have made me happier than I have been for many a day. I am sorry that one of your playmates is so dishonorable but I rejoice in my manly grandson.”

Oliver’s sense of pleasure at his grandfather’s words more than repaid him for the shame he had endured.

“Marse Godfrey, dis Oliver jist like de odder Oliver. Wish he could see him now. It make him glad I know.”

“Alas! Alas! Ag, the other Oliver will never more see this one. The cruel waves stilled his warm heart. We three alone are left of those who knew and loved him best.”

“Marse Godfrey, somet’ing in old Ag’s heart tell him God will nebber close his ole eyes in def till dey see young Marse Oliver again.”

“God knows how fondly I wish it might be but I have no hope at all. My hopes are dead like almost all the fond dreams and hallowed associations of the past. Oliver, my child, do not weep over what we have lost. Turn with hope to the future. And, whatever be your lot in life, remember that anything—even death—is better than dishonor.”

CHAPTER III

NIG “STANDS BY” OLIVER

The next morning a pleasant picture awaited the master while on his way to school. He had almost reached her father's gate when he saw Susie Neff standing there awaiting his approach. Hastily giving his necktie a pull, thinking to straighten it but in reality making it worse; giving his coat a more graceful set and shifting his books to his left arm, to be in readiness to touch his hat with his right, this very bashful pedagogue approached.

“Good morning, Miss Susie,” said he touching his hat awkwardly, with eyes so intently fixed on Susie's face, or the nearest tree top or on nothing—he didn't know which—that, stumbling over a small stump, his bow was much more real and vigorous than he expected.

“Good morning, Mr. Sumley. I hope you are well.”

“Never better in my life. Are your folks all well?”

“They are very well, thank you. Mr. Sumley, I came out this morning to ask you to go out boat riding with a small party of us this evening.”

“I don’t know. I am not much acquainted with the young people around here.”

“Never mind that. You will easily get acquainted. Come to our house this evening for supper. I shall take care of you.”

“Then I’ll come, Miss Susie, but I am afraid that if you undertake to take care of one as rough and unpolished as myself you will have a hard task and no profit.”

“I’ll risk that,” said Susie, as she turned away.

Susie Neff was a worthy girl, with a nature a good deal like that of her little sister, Nellie, with whom you are already acquainted. Good-looking, bright, cheerful, warm-hearted, no one in the little

village had more friends. She was now twenty years of age. Her father was one of the most intelligent and well-to-do men of the place. Her mother had wealthy relatives living in Louisville. These Susie often visited, acquiring a refinement of manner, a knowledge of society impossible to acquire at Maxtone's Point.

This was not the first time that Mr. Sumley had met Susie. He had met her more times than was good for his peace of mind. What his thoughts were as he walked along may be guessed from what, unconsciously to himself, he said aloud as he suddenly stopped his walk.

"Andrew Sumley, what kind of foolish notions are these going through your head now? Such a looking creature as you are, too! Do you suppose such a girl would look at you if she didn't feel sorry for your loneliness? No, no; it's kindness, not regard, that makes her notice you. Don't you dare presume on her kindness."

These were rough words for one to address to himself. They show, however,

that the master was an honest man. After all, there were some things to admire in the character of Mr. Sumley. He was honest and modest.

Oliver had nearly reached the school-house on this same morning, when, on rounding a turn in the road, he saw Nig sitting whittling and whistling on the top rail of a high fence. Jumping lightly to the ground as Oliver reached the place, Nig, with his usual directness, came at once to his object.

“Oliver,” he said, “I guess I know who played that trick yesterday. Leastways, I know who always has done such things and then tried to lie out of them. Wasn’t it Tim Snideby?”

“If you will promise not to tell the teacher on him I will tell you who it was,” said Oliver.

“You bet I’ll not do that. I don’t go much on a feller that’s always a tellin’ on somebody.”

“Well, then, it was Tim.”

“I knowed it and I told Tony I’d bet my last copper it was him. I know Tim

Snideby and I know his tricks. He's done right this term about as long as he ever does. The teacher had better watch him, if he does act so nice. But he sha'n't get off so easy this time while I'm around. I promised yesterday to stand by you and I'm a goin' to do it."

"What will you do?" asked Oliver.

"You just wait and see. Me and Tony talked it over. We know what we'll do. Tim Snideby better look out."

Nig accompanied these threatening words with many shakings of the head and what he aimed to be fierce looks. Truly, if anyone came under the displeasure of Nig, it were well for him, as he said, to "look out." For he was both strong and brave. Besides he had a certain impulsive resolution that made him a bad kind of boy to have for an enemy.

When the two boys reached the school-house, Oliver went quietly to his seat. Nig went to the play-ground.

Timothy was talking and laughing with the master when Oliver went in but went immediately afterwards out to the play-

ground as if uneasy in the presence of the boy he had wronged. Oliver was so contented in his consciousness of right, and proud of his grandfather's approval, that he looked upon the misguided nature of Timothy with lofty disdain.

At the noon hour, Oliver was sitting quietly in his place when Nellie came in, her face flushed with exercise, and took a seat in front of him.

"I thought you must be lonesome in here by yourself, so I came in to show you my new story book," said the little girl.

"I am lonesome, Nellie, but I am not so selfish as to let you leave the playground to keep me from being so."

"O, I don't care to play any more. And, besides, I like to talk to you. You are not rough like the other boys. You never tear our play-houses down."

"I don't think it manly to do such things, Nellie. I like to talk to you, too. You are kind and good."

Thanks to Oliver's grandfather, he was advanced in his reading far beyond Nellie's picture book. But he was not past

Nellie's simple kindness, pleasant smile and warm heart. After looking through the book, Nellie said :

“ Do you know how to play criss-cross, Oliver ? ”

“ No, but I should like to learn.”

“ Well, you make four straight lines ” —she made them on Oliver's slate as she spoke— “ inclosing a square. You must let the lines be longer than the square, so there will be corners outside of the corners of the square.” Nellie did not know about angles. She called them corners. “ Then we can mark, turn about, in all the outside corners, on the sides and in the center of the square. Whoever first gets three marks in a straight row wins the game. You may mark first.”

“ All right. Here goes for the center,” said Oliver.

They spent a pleasant noon hour, becoming very well acquainted and each finding much to admire in the other. Oliver, that day learned that he had more and better friends than he supposed. Thereafter, his school days were

more pleasant, though, childlike, he did not understand that it was his own right conduct and the gentle friendship of Nellie that made them so. Nellie had in her short life discovered the golden secret which people sometimes spend fortunes and lives of travel to learn, that *happiness is found in trying to make others happy.*

That evening, Nig and Tony left the school-house as quickly as they could. Their way led them past Mr. Snideby's. The road, which was very poor, ungraded, and fringed on each side with bushes, led on past Mr. Neff's, thence toward the river. As Mr. Sumley was going to Neff's that evening for supper, Nellie and little Joe stayed to accompany him.

Timothy Snideby was loitering along on his way home, a little distance ahead of the master. He was picking a bunch of hazel nuts from a bush by the roadside when a strong hand clutched his collar and literally dragged him behind a cluster of bushes. Recovering from his first fright but still trembling he arose when

he was released and saw Nig, the boy of all others whom he most dreaded and feared, standing threateningly near.

“Now you miserable coward, how do you like that? Maybe you’d like to have another shake of the same kind?” cried Nig, his eyes flashing.

“What have I done to you? I’ve done nothin’ to you,” cried Timothy, cowering.

“Who put the turtle in the master’s desk and then cowardly lied about it? Who lets a boy what didn’t do it take the punishment belongin’ to the boy what did? I know all about you, Tim Snideby, and so does Tony. We know you put that turtle in there and now you’re coward enough to let a boy you’re not good enough to look at bear the blame.”

“Who told you?” whined Timothy.

“Oliver told me hisself. Now, look here, Tim Snideby, the master’s a comin’ along here in a minute. If you don’t go out there in the road and tell him you did that trick, I’ll pound you till you can’t get home. Are you a goin’ to do it?”

Timothy was a coward though nearly

as large as Nig. It was a terrible thing to tell the master, it was equally terrible to face his fierce schoolmate. He hoped Nig would not do as he said. He would try him. He would try begging.

“We’ve always been good friends, Nig. I’ve always thought lots of you. I didn’t do—” He did not finish the sentence. With lowering brow, without a word, Nig’s strong hand was on his collar again and the frightened fellow was being shaken with a violence that threatened the dislocation of his joints.

“Let me go! Let me go! I’ll tell him,” he cried, shaking with fear.

Nig kept his hand on the boy’s collar till the road was reached but released him as the master approached. Timothy was trembling in every limb, as well he might, for it would be hard to imagine a much worse position than he found himself in at that moment.

As the master drew near, he saw that something serious was about to happen but little guessed the truth. He thought it was a case of fighting. Nig was stand-

ing calmly near Timothy but one could tell by his hard breathing and determined look that he was resolved to do all he could for his friend, Oliver.

“You boys have been fighting, I suppose. Well, I shall know how to deal with you in the morning,” said the master, sternly.

“We’ve not been a fightin’, sir, leastways, Tim hasn’t. If you please, sir, Tim has somethin’ to say to you about that turtle trick,” said Nig.

“Well, Timothy, what about it? I suppose you have found out who did it and have now stopped to tell me. I hope you do not think it wrong to tell me.”

Timothy did not think it wrong but, no doubt, he thought it extremely embarrassing. He thought once that he would try to deny it but a look at Nig who, as though he suspected something of the kind, stood back of the master, caused him to abandon the thought.

“Please, sir, I done it,” he whimpered.

“You!” almost shouted the master.
“You, Timothy. I would have believed

such a thing of any one else sooner than you. And you denied it yesterday. O, Timothy! I have been deeply deceived in you. And you let an innocent boy suffer in your place. I will hear more of this in the morning. You can go."

Timothy, his face covered with shame and confusion, went to his home. The master passed on.

"I told you, Tony, we'd bring that feller to time," said Nig as Tony came out of the thicket where he had lain concealed during Timothy's enforced confession. "Because," Nig had said, "If we both come out, Tim 'll say, 'Two on one isn't fair play.' I told you Tim Snideby better look out."

When Mr. Sumley reached Mr. Neff's gate, it was yet early in the evening and some time before the supper hour. Excusing himself, he took his way toward the Robertaine cottage which was not very far beyond Neff's. He was deeply mindful of the wrong which Oliver had suffered. He resolved that the night should not pass by until the boy should

be relieved from suspicion. The master was a just man, after a fashion—his own fashion. He would be found, however, to possess a certain rugged manliness and honesty that seldom failed to win upon those who knew him well. Arrived at the cottage, he was met at the door by Uncle Ag, and, as the house was small, he found himself, at once, in the presence of Oliver and his grandfather.

“I believe I have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Andrew Sumley, the teacher,” said the old gentleman, with fine politeness.

“I am the teacher. You are Oliver’s grandfather I suppose,” said the master, awkwardly returning the polished bow.

Mr. Sumley, with his usual abruptness, came at once to the object of his call by saying :

“Mr. Robertaine, you have heard that we have had some trouble at the school, lately, for which your grandson has been punished.”

“Oliver has told me something of it,” said Mr. Robertaine, with lofty dignity.

He thought that, perhaps, the teacher had come to complain of Oliver. The thought gave him high displeasure.

“Well,” the master continued, “I have come to tell you that we have found the boy who is really guilty. Oliver has no blame resting on him.” Uncle Ag’s face, at hearing this, assumed a look of supreme pleasure. “I have unjustly blamed him but, now, I have come to ask your pardon and his also. I will say too that I highly honor the boy who has such a noble heart as your grandson.”

The old grandfather’s look of lofty dignity vanished and a look of sincere pleasure beamed on his face.

“He is a good and noble boy, Mr. Sumley, and it makes me very glad to hear you say what you have. Do not further distress your mind with the thought that we have any ill will against you. The matter was a mistake. Happily the right has conquered as it always will. I am much pleased to find you the man you are, Mr. Sumley, for, frankly, I had begun to entertain a disagreeable opinion of you.”

“I have done no more than my duty, sir. I could not rest without setting the matter right,” answered the master.

After spending some time in friendly conversation, Mr. Sumley took his leave. He was invited by the old gentleman to spend some of his evenings by his fireside.

CHAPTER IV

MR. SUMLEY GOES BOAT-RIDING

When Mr. Sumley arrived at Neff's, on his return from Robertaine's, Nellie was at the gate to meet him. Taking him by the hand she led him into the house. The kindness and artlessness of the little girl made him feel at home at once.

"Mr. Sumley, you are welcome to our home," said Mrs. Neff, herself, as she appeared from her work. Her kind, motherly face said the same as her words. "I hope you will not mind my untidy appearance."

"It does not matter about the clothes we wear so the heart is right, Mrs. Neff. Your little girl has already made me welcome."

"Nellie is a kind child, Mr. Sumley, and if you will excuse me, I will leave her to entertain you while I attend to my work."

“I could not ask for a better entertainer,” responded the master, as Mrs. Neff retired.

Soon Mr. Neff, the father, entered. A quiet, modest man he was, considerably past forty years of age; not a polished man but a gentleman. He greeted the master cordially. As is usual, when patrons entertain the teacher, the conversation soon turned to school matters.

“You have been having a little trouble, I hear,” said Mr. Neff.

“Everything has been going well until that affair yesterday,” answered the master. “We have found the guilty boy, though, and I guess there will be no more trouble about that.”

“And you found that the Robertaine boy was not the one, too, did you not?”

“Yes, sir; it was not Oliver but the Snideby boy. I could scarcely have believed it of him had he not told me himself.”

“Told you himself!” cried Mr. Neff, in surprise. “That is something I did not suppose he would do. But when my

wife and I heard about it we said at once that we believed that the wrong boy was being punished. We thought it was the Snideby boy. But he confessed it, did he? He must be going to do better. I am downright glad to hear that he was manly enough to confess rather than let an innocent schoolmate suffer the blame."

"I am just a little afraid you are giving him more credit than he deserves. I don't know positively but I think from what I saw this evening that Thomas Niggins had something to do with Timothy's confessing."

"I should not be surprised. That Niggins fellow is a queer chap. There is not a better-hearted boy, though, and he is no coward either. Almost everyone is down on the Snideby boy. I, for one, don't think he has much chance to do better. He has absolutely no encouragement at home."

"Mr. Neff, you surprise me. I wish you would tell me all that you mean."

"Well, I'll do so. Mrs. Neff and myself are thought to be a little peculiar in

our views about training our children. We believe that parents should try to take a loving interest in their children, should encourage them in their studies, should talk over school matters with them and try to make them see the difference between right and wrong. They should sympathize with them, be companions to them. It is seldom that we ever seriously punish a child of our own and *never in anger.*" Mr. Sumley winced at this but Mr. Neff did not notice it. "Now, old Simon Snideby never pays much more attention to Tim than to a stranger. If he does talk about school at all it is to tell how he used to play tricks on the teacher and fight with the boys when he was young. When Tim gets into trouble at school, his father, without asking any questions, gives him a brutal beating. I do believe the boy has come to regard his father as little more than a tyrant whom it is right to outwit and deceive if he can. Tim may be a very bad boy but I think he is not altogether to blame. My way may be all wrong, Mr.

Sumley, but I've had better success with it than Simon Snideby has with his way."

"Mr. Neff, you have set me to thinking. Something ought to be done. Had Mr. Snideby no other children except Timothy?"

"He had two other boys, but they ran away a good while ago. I don't know where they are now."

"You have given me some new ideas this evening, Mr. Neff. Timothy is a bright boy and learns fast. If he should get a whipping to-morrow morning, do you think his father would beat him when he went home?"

"I am sure he would, and that, too, without asking any questions," replied Mr. Neff.

"Then he will not be whipped. I have been a harsh teacher in all the schools I have taught, and yet I have many times thought that there is a milder course. I must carefully think over this matter."

Nellie now came to announce supper. They all went to the kitchen, which also served the purpose of dining-room. At

the table Mr. Sumley, to his great satisfaction, was placed beside Susie.

Susie was dressed plainly but neatly, and in a manner which in every way harmonized with the day and place. There was a total absence of everything like smartness or a seeming desire to "show off," which made her manner charming. She was so quiet, modest, gentle, and looked so pleasant, that—well, poor Mr. Sumley wished he were a handsomer man.

Supper being over, the master and Susie started for the river not far distant. When they arrived at the platform where the boats usually came to land, some half dozen young people were waiting for them. Some of them were already in the little boats, some sitting on the bank, and all having a merry time.

Each couple went in a boat alone, but the company all kept their boats near each other. The evening was still and pleasant. The bright moonlight lent a softened beauty to every object it touched.

The merry party ascended the river till they were tired of rowing, it being the in-

tention to drift back with the current. As they were floating back the party found themselves separated from each other. The boat of the master and Susie was considerably behind the others, on the way back, because Mr. Sumley's vigorous arm had driven his boat farthest up the stream.

That was a happy hour when he found himself afloat with Susie on the quiet water. The quiet stream, the gentle motion, the silvery moonlight and Susie, all combined, made him wish the hour could last a lifetime. As Susie artlessly looked up at him, her dark eyes glowing, her pretty hand dragging in the water, the thought came to him that he should like to see her in some danger, once, just to show her how much he would dare for her sake. The master talked with a readiness that was surprising that evening.

The quiet walk home from the river, the slow parting at the gate, the peculiar feeling of loneliness he felt as he walked home along the lonesome road, stayed in the master's mind and before his eyes with singular clearness. Somehow the

thought of Susie's gentle goodness would come up before him with a force that made him wish to be a better man. His was a very earnest and positive nature. Whatever impressions he had were likely to be strong; whatever opinions, decided.

It will be remembered that Mr. Sumley thought himself much too unpolished to suppose that a lady of Susie Neff's singular purity and gentleness could admire him. He resolved that he would try to make himself more deserving. As usual, he began in a practical way.

As they had left the boat that evening, Susie picked up a pretty shell of which there were many along the river side. The two halves of the shell were yet joined when she picked them up but, while carrying them home, they fell apart. One piece fell to the ground. On picking it up, Mr. Sumley asked if he might keep it. With a blush, Susie gave him the shell.

Probably there is not a man in all the world, even among the confirmed bachelors, who has not, put away somewhere

in some hallowed place, some little heart treasure given by a fair hand. These little treasures sometimes become the talismans of men's lives.

Mr. Sumley, among his other failings of which he now wished to rid himself, was a moderate smoker. When he reached his humble room, on returning from the boat-ride, he filled one of his pipes, sat down by the open window and prepared to light it. Suddenly he stopped as if in earnest thought. He started to light it again, again stopped. Rising, he threw his tobacco away, broke his two or three pipes in pieces, placed them in a heap on the table and, taking out the shell which Susie had given him, placed that on the very top of the heap. He meant this to signify that her influence should hinder the influence of the pipe from ever mastering him again. There is nothing so very singular in this resolution. Doubtless, many another, under like influences, has acted similarly. The singular thing about the master's resolution was that he kept it.

The next day brought the question of how to manage the Snideby boy. On the walk to school and while waiting for the pupils to arrive this subject was uppermost in his mind. He knew how he always had managed such things, but it seemed to him that there must be some better way. He did not want to whip a boy whom he deeply pitied. Somehow he felt that Timothy was more deserving of sympathy than blows. In common with nearly all the teachers of that day and place, he had governed his school on the well-known principle laid down since by Bill Jones, in "The Hoosier Schoolmaster," that "lickin' an' larnin'" go together, but this morning he was rapidly losing faith in this narrow view. He had read considerably on the subject, but had never put his reading into practice. He resolved to try to conduct the matter firmly but mildly, and, should he fail in that, then resort to harsh methods.

Timothy did not come to school that morning until almost school time. He did not go upon the play-ground at all,

but went at once to his seat. Several of the pupils had already learned that Timothy had confessed. Only the master, Nig, Tony and Timothy knew that Nig had frightened him into doing so. The master had guessed it the evening before during the scene in the road, and when Tony came had asked him about it in such a way that Tony, thinking he knew all about it already, told him all he knew. He and Nig were cautioned not to tell any one else all the facts, but to treat the affair as though Timothy had willingly confessed.

When "school took up" about half the pupils' faces wore a disturbed look. They no doubt thought, that, according to the usual custom, "Tim would catch it!" When the teacher arose at his desk, his face looked firm but not unkind. Pupils do not usually like to hear the teacher make a speech. It is to be hoped they will be patient just this once.

"We have all been much mistaken in the last day or two," the master calmly said. "I am glad that everything has

now come right. We have blamed Oliver for an act which has caused us much trouble. No further blame rests on him. He is not guilty, and I want to say to you all that I honor the boy who can shield a schoolmate at such expense to himself. I am glad that Timothy has been manly enough to come to me and confess that he did the act for which Oliver has been punished. I am very sorry that he should have done anything so bad, but glad of the spirit he has shown in owning to it. There is an evil in our natures which sometimes causes us to do wrong without stopping to think. I hope this has been the case with you, Timothy. I hope you are sorry to cause one so much trouble who has always been your friend. I am more sorry that you permitted another to be punished for what you have done than for anything else that has happened. But your confession has greatly softened that offense. I will not whip you, for I think you are already sorry enough." Timothy's eyes were wet with tears; his face was bowed on his hands. This was much

different from the way he had been treated before. The master's words hurt him more than a whipping would have done. "You may take such punishment as Oliver has endured until such time as I shall excuse you."

The pupils were astonished. They could not understand it. That Timothy did not get a severe whipping was new to them. And the master's face looked even kind through it all. The discipline of that school did not suffer because of the master's mildness, but his position was made more secure than it had ever been before.

Oliver was greatly pleased. It made him glad to think that Timothy had been manly enough to own his wrong. Every one likes to stand honorably before his companions. After all his troubles, Oliver found himself in this position. He had followed a course which he knew to be right. The consciousness of this gave him more real pleasure than even the warm praise of the master. Oliver's fine sense of manliness and honor was not an

instinct. He was not born that way any more than other boys. His disposition was largely the result of training, partly due to himself, partly to his grandfather, partly due to other influences.

When Oliver came upon the play-ground at noon, everything was in a turmoil. The little girls had built themselves quite a fine playhouse—fine to them at least. Of course the walls were made by laying sticks along on the ground, the furniture was made of bark and moss. The little ladies were having a splendid time, making and receiving calls, attending to the usual household—play-household—affairs and otherwise enjoying themselves when three or four of the boys appeared on the scene. They behaved all right for a little while then they began moving the sticks of the wall, tearing the furniture in pieces, finally ending by tearing up everything.

The poor little housekeepers were in consternation. Some were angry and

scolding, some crying and all trying to build a new house. As fast as it was built, the boys destroyed it.

On approaching, Oliver saw it all. He saw what mischief the boys had done, saw them laughing at the little girls, saw Nellie crying. His indignation flashed up in a moment. He sprang into the playhouse, his eyes flashing and his very fingers tingling with anger.

“Touch another stick of this playhouse if you dare.” He cried.

In defiance, one of the boys considerably larger than Oliver aimed a kick at a little bench of broken dishes. While he was yet in the act, Oliver’s fist landed squarely on his cheek and sent him reeling backwards. The others now came on and, despite his brave heart, Oliver would have fared badly had not help come at that instant. Two of the boys were just in the act of striking the little hero when a strong hand was laid on each of their shoulders and they were jerked backwards with such force as sent them

staggering out of the playhouse and Nig coolly stepped to Oliver's side.

"Two on one isn't no fair play," he said. "If any one of you fellers of Oliver's size has got anything agin him, I've got nothin' to say but no two of you can't jump on him, leastways when I'm around."

Oliver was thoroughly aroused. He felt as if he could fight half a dozen boys, just then. But he held his peace. It was not his nature to quarrel and call names. He felt that he was in the right and was determined to maintain his position.

No one boy seemed to desire to meet the hot courage of Oliver. The dreaded Nig stood in the way of more than one's attacking him. They were therefore compelled to leave him alone. The further play of the little girls was undisturbed.

The misunderstandings and anger of schoolboys do not usually last very long. This was the case now. Before long they were all playing together again.

CHAPTER V

TIMOTHY SNIDEBY AND HIS FATHER GET ACQUAINTED

As Timothy was starting home in the evening of the day that he had been punished, he heard the master calling after him.

“Wait a minute, Timothy. I am going with you.”

Closing the school-house, the master took his hat and joined the boy. They walked some time in silence.

“Timothy,” said the master at last, “I am going home with you to tell your father all about your trouble.”

“Oh, Mr. Sumley, for mercy’s sake, please don’t do that,” the boy cried in terror. “You don’t know him. He will beat me dreadfully if you do.”

“Your father will not beat you, my boy, if I can prevent it. It is for that

very purpose that I am going home with you. I am sorry for you, and I want to be your friend."

"I've never had any friends in my life. I don't know what it is to have a friend." The boy's face was beginning to show emotion. Tears were coming into his eyes. There is a way to touch all hearts. Andrew Sumley had found that way to this particular heart. Loving sympathy is a golden key which just fits the strongest door to the stoniest heart.

"You forget your mother, Timothy."

"My mother is — "

He could not speak the rest, but the flow of tears and the deep sob told the sad story. His mother was dead.

"My poor boy, I am sorry for you," said the master, not without emotion. "I will be your friend. I will try to help you to be the kind of boy your mother would wish you to be."

The situation in which Mr. Sumley found himself was somewhat awkward to him. It was a new way for him to conquer. He scarcely knew what to say fur-

ther. He had assured the boy of his friendship, touched his feelings, probably aroused his nobler feelings. Little more could be done. They walked in silence till Timothy's home was reached.

The master found Mr. Snideby hard at work. He was a man about sixty-five years of age. The sternness of his nature was very plainly to be seen in the hard lines of his face. He was a hard worker, partly because he did not know any other way to pass his time. He spent no time in reading, and considered time thus spent as wasted. He looked at the world from a very narrow point of view, and held his own opinions, with ignorant stubbornness, against everybody else.

The usual greeting over, the master abruptly came to his object.

"Mr. Snideby, I have come to speak to you about some little trouble I have been having with your son."

"Drat the boy! He's been up to some of his tricks agin, has he? I'll skin 'im alive!" the irate father exclaimed violently.

"But you don't understand all about it yet. He did not do anything so very bad. I think we can do more with him by kindness and sympathy than by scolding and whipping," quickly interrupted the master.

"Drat yer kindness! Ef ye expect to keep school at Maxtun's Pint with kindness, ye'll miss yer guess. They's nothin' like plenty o' thrashin'. I allus says to Tim, says I, 'you mind yer eye, sonny. Ef ye git a lickin' at school ye'll git a heap wuss one whenever ye git home.' "

"Mr. Snideby, I have tried your plan for nearly six years. I am going to try kindness now. I believe I have already done more with your son by being kind to him than I could have done in any other way." Here he told all the circumstances as they have already been given. "Have you ever," he continued, "tried mild means with your son? Did you try kindness with the two boys who are wanderers this evening—God knows where?"

The stern man looked angry, but at

the same time his lip quivered with emotion. He seemed about to make some reply, but did not.

“I want to ask this favor of you, Mr. Snideby. I want you to help me rule your boy by kindness. Talk sometimes about the school with him, show him that you care for him. Be kind to him. I think I can promise you that no more tales of his mischief will ever come home to you.”

“I don’t take up no great sight with yer plan,” said the father, a great deal softened by the thoughts of his two boys who were wanderers, he knew not where. “But I s’pose it won’t do no hurt. It won’t hurt nothin’ to try it once, anyhow.”

After some further talk, the master took his leave, much pleased with the result of his call. He was passing the winding, bush-fringed road which led away from the house when he heard a step at the roadside and Timothy stood before him. In an anxious voice the boy asked after the result of the interview.

“ You need not fear. Your father knows the circumstances, and I do not think he will be severe on you. I think your father will be kind to you if you will try to please him by doing as he wishes. Your father is old and has seen much sorrow. You should be kind to him.”

The master passed on. The boy stood looking after him till his form was lost to sight beyond a turn in the road. Then he turned thoughtfully away. He went to his chore work that evening with a much plainer idea of life and its duties than his fallow mind had ever known before.

A pleasant sight awaited Mr. Sumley while on the way to his boarding place. As he passed Mr. Neff’s, Susie was sitting sewing by a front window. He gallantly lifted his hat, Susie bowed and smiled. A smile is only a little thing, after all, but then, Susie could smile more sweetly than almost any one else, Mr. Sumley thought. Any way, the smile made him walk with a prouder step, and imparted to his honest

heart a warmer glow. He did not take his usual smoke that evening.

The next day was Friday. The master had not been long at the school-house when Oliver, Nellie and little Joe came. Somehow the dingy old school-room seemed to brighten when Nellie came in. She seemed to carry sunshine with her wherever she went. The master was scarcely aware of the debt he owed the little girl. Was a child hurt on the play-ground, Nellie's arm was first around it and her hand was first to wipe away its tears. Did a quarrel break out among her little playmates, Nellie could nearly always quickly restore harmony again. On even Mr. Sumley's somewhat grave nature the quiet gentleness of the little girl, all unconsciously to herself, exerted a powerful influence. Oliver, with his singular manly pride and lofty spirit, was very sensible of her gentle sway.

Oliver's fortunes had undergone an agreeable change. He had been misunderstood, teased, by his playmates; suspected, punished, by the master. He had

passed through it all with no discredit to his manliness or sacrifice of his lofty pride. When the test came, he had proved to his companions that his courage was equal to any of theirs. From the least popular, he had come to be one of the most popular. No one, except Nig, had a greater influence among the boys.

Calling Oliver to him and laying his hand on his head, the master said :

“Oliver, I have something to do in which I shall need your help. May I depend on you ? ”

“Why, Mr. Sumley ! How should I be able to help you ? ”

“I want you to help make a more pleasant life for Timothy. I believe he is sorry for what he has done and wants to do better. You may think you have reasons to look upon him with bitter feelings, but I think it would be better not to treat him as you feel.”

“Mr. Sumley, he has been dishonest and cowardly.”

“Oliver, you don’t know as much about all the circumstances as I do. I feel that

this is the best way to do—in fact, the only way."

The intelligent, blue eyes looked long and thoughtfully at the master, as though the boy pondered deeply. At last he said, "I think I understand you. I will try."

"I wish you would speak to the other boys—to Nig in particular. Timothy has had but little chance. He has had little or no encouragement at home."

Oliver promised.

As he walked away the master thought that he had never seen a more handsome, high-spirited boy. He wondered how it had been possible to believe that deception and falsehood could lurk behind such an honest eye, such a manly brow.

When Nig came swinging along with careless step, the picture of health and contentment, at peace with all the world, Oliver took him to a place where they could not be heard and tried to tell him the wishes of the master.

"What! That good-fer-nothin', sneak-in' cow—" Nig did not finish the last

word. Oliver had quietly put his hand over his impetuous companion's mouth.

"You must remember, Nig, that Timothy don't have as much help at home as you or I. I am going to help him along if I can," Oliver said, quietly.

"Tim don't have much of a show to home, an' that's a fact. But you've got more agin him than I have, an' if you say call it even, why, here goes. I'm a goin' to stand by you. After all, I do feel kind o' sorry fer Tim. The ole man thrashes him terrible sometimes."

Nig was a singular compound of impulsiveness, cool courage, intrepid daring, warm-heartedness and genius. He had a great, tender heart in his broad chest. His sympathies could be aroused more easily than one who did not know him well would suppose.

The two boys now joined the others, assured that each understood the other.

Timothy had come to school that morning, not in the dogged manner in which he had come before, but cheerfully. He went immediately to his seat. The mas-

ter came up to exchange a pleasant word with him. Timothy really had a quick, bright mind. There was almost a feverish quickness in his grasp of the lessons. Under other circumstances he might have made a brilliant scholar, but his surroundings had injured his mental growth beyond calculation. This morning the master noted with pleasure that he went quietly, even cheerfully, to his work. This encouraged him to think that what in his own mind he thought of as his "kindness policy" was already producing good fruits.

The boys of the school had long been planning a nutting party to take place on some Saturday. With the exception of Timothy, they all met at noon at the old tree-top to talk the matter over. The next day being Saturday, it was decided to have the party then. Plans were made to meet at the school-house the next morning and start from there. Each boy was to take his dinner along and stay all day. Only the larger boys—some six or eight in all—were to go.

“Who’ll tell Tim?” asked one of the boys.

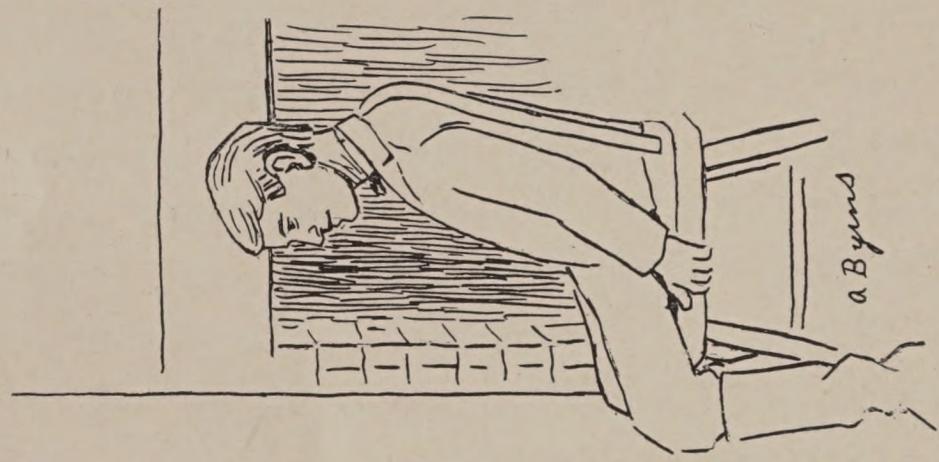
“Never you mind about Tim,” some one answered. “A boy that’ll treat a feller like Tim treated Oliver we don’t want along. Do we, boys?”

The expression against Timothy was very general. Poor fellow! He would probably have been left out, thus, perhaps, wrecking the new “kindness policy” of the master, had not Oliver raised his voice in his defense.

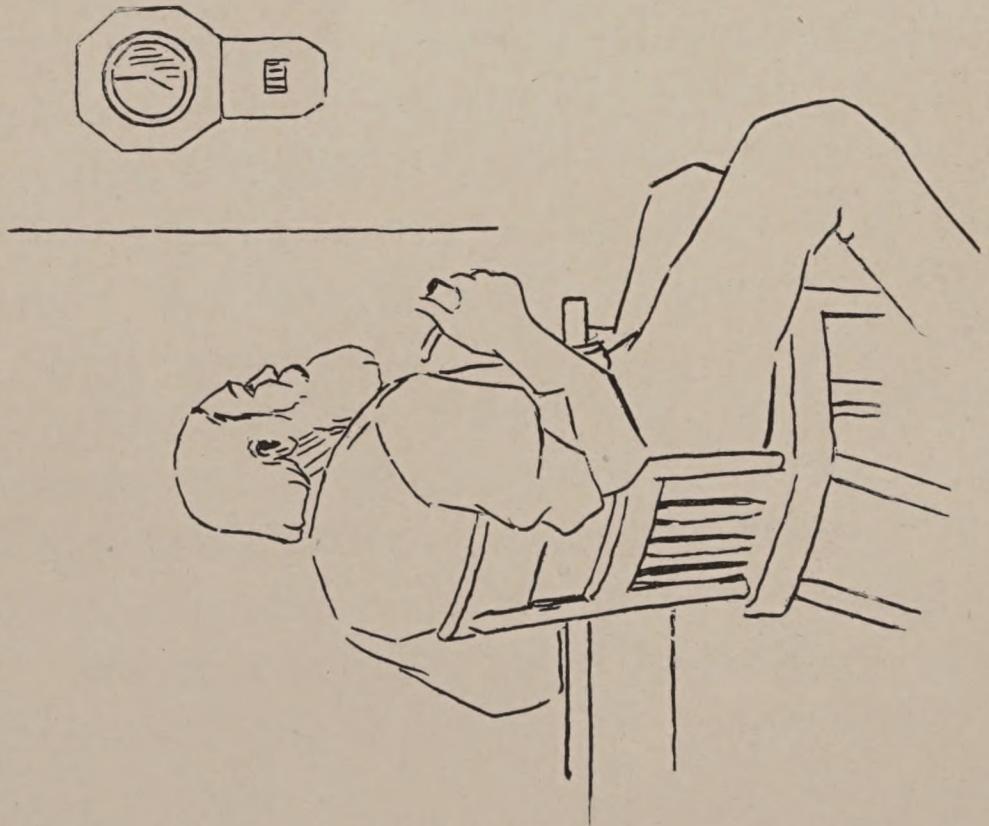
“Boys,” he said, “you say that Timothy has done me a wrong. If he did, he has been man enough to own it.” At this Nig and Tony exchanged meaning looks, but said nothing. “He is taking his punishment without complaining, and I, for one, say let’s take him along, and let’s treat him right.”

The boys looked at him in astonishment. This generous conduct was much unlike what they had been accustomed to see. No one seemed to know what to say.

“I’m a goin’ to stand by Oliver,” exclaimed Nig at last in his hearty way.



a Byard



TIM AND HIS FATHER GET ACQUAINTED.

"I say let him come along," said Tony.

"Tim don't have as good a show as the rest of us, and that's a fact," said another boy.

After some further talk, it was settled that Timothy should go with them. When school closed that evening, the boys gathered around him to tell him of the party and invite him to go along.

Timothy went home that evening with a lighter heart than he had carried for many days.

The evening's work was all done. Timothy and his father were sitting alone in the quiet evening. At last the boy mustered up courage to ask permission to go with the nutting party the next day. The old man hesitated, seemingly in deep meditation.

"I had set my head on yer helpin' with the taters to-morrow, Tim," the father said, at last. The boy's hopes sank. He wanted very much to go. Suddenly the parting words of the master, on the evening as he came from the interview with his father, came into his mind. He looked

quickly at his father sitting there in deep thought. The boy wondered why he had never before noticed that his father's hair was so very gray. And his form was bent, too, and his hands were worn with toil. The rough, worn, old hand, resting on the arm of the old-fashioned chair, seemed in some mysterious manner to touch the boy's heart. He wondered why he had not noticed all this before.

"Father, if you need me, I'm willin' to stay an' help you," the boy said, softly.

The old man looked up quickly at his son. He wondered why he had never before noticed what fine eyes the boy had —just like his mother's eyes. He thought it strange that he had never before observed how intelligent looking his son was.

"No, Tim," said the old man, slowly, "the taters can wait. You can go 'long."

The father had not, until that evening, become acquainted in a proper sense with his son nor the son with his father. Neither had tried to understand the other. Such relations between parents and chil-

dren are sadly common, and are answerable for many of the unhappy misunderstandings between them.

The acquaintance begun that evening between Timothy and his father resulted in much benefit and a more kindly feeling between them. Simon Snideby was, perhaps, incapable of showing much feeling, but, from that evening he liked to have his son near him. He seemed to find pleasure in talking to the boy about his work and his plans. As for Timothy, he took a positive delight in being the companion and confidant of his white-haired father.

CHAPTER VI

THE NUTTING PARTY

The next day dawned fair and bright.
The very day for a nutting party!

The boys arrived one by one with bag
and basket.

As Oliver came past Mr. Neff's, Nellie
came running out. She had a fine apple
and a piece of cake for him. She had
“baked the cake all by herself,” she said.

Promising her some of the finest beech-
nuts he could find, Oliver put the gift
carefully away in his well-stored basket.
If the truth must be told, it was not a
specially fine-looking piece of cake, but
then, it was Nellie’s “first cake,” you
know.

Just as Oliver arrived at the school-
house, Tony came carrying a big, rusty
hatchet. “’Cause,” he said, “we might
want to chop somethin’.”

Nig soon came carrying a gun—an old musket that had been carried by a veteran of the War of Independence. He told Tony in confidence that "the ole thing" was "loaded with a han' full o' buck-shot."

Boys, in those days, were often taught the use of a gun at an early age. Nig was the largest boy of the party. He had been accustomed to the use of the gun for more than a year, and had become able to shoot with considerable accuracy. On this accomplishment he greatly prided himself.

All the boys having arrived, the party proceeded on their way. The route lay among the many hills which extended several miles back from the river on that side. A happy party they were. Timothy was treated as well as though no disgrace hung over him.

As they went gaily along, they met John Lewitt, an old man who lived a short way from the village and made a scanty living by fishing and making baskets.

"Whar be you fellers a goin' all so fast?" said the old man.

"Back among the hills to gather nuts," answered Oliver, politely.

Some of the boys, to their shame be it said, had walked behind the queer-looking old man and had begun to make sport of him. By all kinds of motions and grimaces, they called attention to his ragged garments and bent form. It is to be hoped that he did not see them. It must be a sad thing for the old and poor to have the infirmities of age become the subject of idle sport. A sad heart is too great a price to pay for a little fun. Oliver felt ashamed of his thoughtless companions. Nearly every boy there had, at various times, been indebted to the old man for boat rides, hints about catching fish and many other like favors. "Better stay out o' them hills. Nick Jeems seed a creetur in them hills day afore yesterd'y 'at he 'lowed war a painter."

The old man's warning was not heeded. He tottered on toward the village, the boys went on their way. In a little while,

the circumstance of meeting him was forgotten.

As the party proceeded, Nig and Oliver, near noon, found themselves somewhat in advance of the rest. Suddenly a squirrel jumped up from the leaves on the ground, making a great clattering and chattering as he did so, and skurried away to his home in an old oak. The two boys gave eager chase. Bunny was too nimble for them, besides he knew the way to his own house better than they did. He reached the tree first. When the boys came up, he was not in sight. He had gone into his house, which was a large hole far up in the oak. His curiosity was too great, though, for him to keep hidden. Soon the boys saw his head cautiously thrust out of his house, watching them. Nig quickly raised the old musket, intending to send the terrible "han' full o' buck-shot" right into poor bunny's face. He was about to pull the trigger when Oliver grasped the barrel of the gun and pulled it down. Nig, a little flushed, turned quickly upon his

companion as though about to make an angry reply.

"Don't you see he would fall back into the den if you killed him now?"

"That's a fact. I didn't think o' that," said Nig.

"My grandfather has taught me that we should never kill anything except for some useful purpose. It would be of no use to kill the creature if you couldn't get it. So it must be wrong."

For a moment Nig looked thoughtfully at Oliver as if he wished to understand the full meaning of the sentiment which was so different from any he had ever heard before.

The boys waited some time for the squirrel to come entirely out, but some of the rest of the party coming up, he was so frightened that he entirely disappeared.

At noon the boys found an open, shady spot under which to eat their dinners. Keen hunger flavored their food. Oliver tested Nellie's cake, but you can be sure he was too much of a little gentleman

ever to tell what he really thought of it. His fine apple he shared with Tony. A spring of excellent water, so common in that locality, supplied them with the very best drink that nature gives.

They were now about five miles from home. It was decided to return by another route which led them deeper among the hills. It seems they cared more for the ramble than to gather nuts.

About the middle of the afternoon a splendid beech tree, more full of its rich fruit than any they had found that day, was seen on the hill-side. Some one had to shake the tree. Timothy and another boy offered. Under the influence of the kind treatment of his teacher and school-mates, the more kindly relations between himself and his father, Timothy showed more spirit than when he thought himself the outcast of all.

The rich beech-nuts were fairly raining upon the ground when a limb on which Timothy had trusted too much weight suddenly broke. The boy was hurled to the ground. The limbs of beeches do

not grow very large but they grow in great abundance. These somewhat broke the force of the fall. Even then, he was so stunned that he lay still and white where he fell. His companions were so frightened that they were almost afraid to approach him. In a short time he regained consciousness and tried to rise. With a cry of pain, he fell back. His ankle had suffered a very severe sprain.

What were the boys to do! More than three miles from home and one of their number crippled! Several plans were suggested; all but one rejected. This plan was to leave their store of nuts where they were, and, two at a time, take turns at helping the injured boy home.

The bags of beech-nuts were placed among the low branches of the tree. When the injured boy had a little recovered from the first keen throbs of pain, he was assisted to his feet. Placing an arm around the neck of a companion on either side of him, he was able to limp

away. After painfully toiling along in this manner for some time, he expressed a wish for crutches.

"If you think you can walk on 'em, Tim, I know how to make 'em," said Nig. "Don't you remember how old Nick Jeems got home from the woods the time the wild hog hurt him? I do. I was there and seen him."

Taking Tony's hatchet, Nig cut down two little bushes that were forked a few feet from the ground, trimmed off the limbs and cut a proper length of the bodies to form the shafts of the crutches. Putting a folded coat in the fork of each rude crutch, he gave them to Timothy with an air of pride. The rough crutches served their purpose well. The crippled boy found it much easier to make his way on them than with the assistance of his companions.

The evening shades were now appearing in the hollows and on the eastern sides of the hills. The shadows of the tall trees fell in long bars across the rugged pathway. In spite of the gloom,

they were trying to make the bad situation as merry as they could.

The party had paused to allow the injured boy to rest. He was leaning against a great rock beside the path, the others grouped around him when, suddenly, from the hill-side above and behind them arose such an appalling cry as fairly froze the blood in their veins. It was a long, shrill, wailing sound somewhat resembling the cry of a child in agony. Only it was ten-fold more frightful. All the lonesomeness, all the terror, all the gloom of the midnight wilderness seemed trembling in its appalling intonations. The boys, with white faces and hard-beating hearts, huddled together. Every eye was turned to Nig.

“The painter!” he almost whispered.
“We must run for our lives.”

Just then the awful cry swelled out again on the trembling air. This time it sounded nearer than before. The party, with all the speed of which the crippled boy was capable, pressed along the path.

Again the dreadful cry arose. This time



THE PANTHER.

it seemed to be almost at their heels. Looking back with timid fearful glances, they saw a light, gray form bound lightly into the narrow path. Wild with fear, the boys broke into a run. Even Timothy tried to run but, with the first step, fell headlong. With a loud cry of pain and fear, he tried to rise. He could not. His crutches were not in reach of his hand.

Oliver heard the cry. He could not desert a schoolmate in such desperate peril. Picking up the old, rusty hatchet which Tony had dropped, he was at Timothy's side in a moment and trying to help him up. Nig also heard the cry and, seeing Oliver turn, hastened back.

There was no time to assist Timothy. The panther was almost upon them. There stood Oliver, his hat off, his bright hair pushed back from his brow, facing the fierce beast. With desperate resolution, Nig placed himself by his friend's side, the old musket in his hand. There was something truly sublime in the sight of the two friends standing together be-

tween danger and a companion whom neither greatly respected.

The panther, crouching low in the path, crawled slowly toward them, its eyes like balls of fire. When within a few yards it stopped, its tail waving from side to side or gently beating the path. It crouched lower. With a cool head and steady hand, considering his youth, Nig leveled the old musket and fired. The fierce creature was in the very act of springing when the report of the musket rolled out among the hills. It sprang. Oliver was borne to the ground. The paw of the fierce beast was on his breast, its hot breath in his face. But it was the last act of the savage animal's life. Even as its fiery eyes flashed above the little hero, its limbs trembled and it fell to the ground. The "han' full o' buck-shot" had fulfilled its mission. The panther was dead.

When Nig saw his friend fall, he gave him up for lost and was trying to aim a blow with the musket when the animal fell. In wild fear he raised the bright

head and wiped the blood from the pale face. Timothy crawled to Oliver's side, his anxiety overcoming his pain and fear. Soon Oliver regained consciousness, when it was found that the panther's claw had cut a long gash from the point of his shoulder down across his breast. Nig bound up the wound, which was not dangerous, though it gave him pain for some time. In a short time Oliver was able to walk, and they all started home again. The panther was fastened to a pole and, on the shoulders of the boys was carried to the village. When they arrived there the sun had set.

In passing one of the two or three stores of the place, the adventures of the nutting party first became known. The news flew rapidly. Before long, everyone in the village and vicinity had heard that "the Niggins boy had shot a painter."

Nig found himself a hero. But when anyone praised him, the generous fellow answered :

"It was all owin' to Oliver. If I hadn't a seen him a facin' the brute, I don't be-

lieve I'd a turned back. He's got more grit than half a dozen like me. I'll tell you he's a plumb brick an' I'm a goin' to stand by 'im."

CHAPTER VII

THE SHIPWRECKED MERCHANT

A few years before Mr. Sumley went to teach his first term at Maxtone's Point, there lived a happy family far in the sunny Southland. In one of the most aristocratic quarters of the Crescent City, surrounded by a beautiful grove of magnolias, stood their splendid mansion. Theirs was a home of ease, love and happiness. Here lived a young man, his wife, his only son, and his white-haired father. Besides these, there was the usual large company of servants, slaves living their light happy lives. It would be hard to find a family who lived more for one another.

The old man and his son were merchants. The family had been merchants and warriors for generations. They were now about to engage in a mercantile en-

terprise much greater than any they had yet undertaken. Their entire commercial strength together with considerable borrowed capital was engaged in it. The hazard was so great, it was decided that the younger man should give the enterprise his personal care. This meant a voyage to lands beyond the sea. Full of hope, he took his wife with him, but left his son with the grandfather, for the old man could not endure to be left all alone.

How the magnolias seemed to sigh that day when the white-haired man and the bright-haired boy returned from the farewell to the dear ones whom they might never see again ! As they strolled hand-in-hand that evening, the boy wondered why the birds sang sadly and the magnolias talked in whispers. What a great, round, empty world it seemed, with no one in it but his grandfather and himself ! His mother and father seemed to be in another world into which the poor, lonesome child could not think himself. That night and many more the little boy slept on a pillow wet with tears.

Long and patiently the grandfather waited. At last, a letter came from his son. It was mailed from the port of a foreign land. After its message of love, it bore the news that the enterprise had resulted much more favorably than they had hoped. Their fortune had almost doubled. He said that the business was all disposed of and that he should sail in a short time for his native shores.

Joy came back to the splendid home. The servants no longer moved about the house with soft steps and anxious faces. With bright anticipation all awaited the coming of the good ship.

The weeks grew into months and still she did not come. With dread they waited. The months grew to years and still she came not. The grandfather's heart seemed to die within him. He could scarcely bear the boy away from him for a moment now. O! the long, quiet evenings they sat hand-in-hand on the wide piazza of the silent house!

And now the creditors began to close in, like harpies, sapping the life of a heart

already almost lifeless. Two traits of the old man's character, his honor and his pride, yet burned with an undiminished flame. Swayed by these, he gave up all. The ancient home which had been the property of the family for generations, the business houses, the slaves, all were given to the creditors. After everything had been settled, a few thousands remained. These, with one old slave almost as old as the grandfather himself, were all that remained of the once proud fortune.

It seemed to him that he could not endure to remain among scenes so full of bitter memories. In the despair of his heart, he wished only to forget and be forgotten. He went away, taking his grandson and the old slave with him. Where he went, only the old family lawyer knew. It is so easy to be forgotten, so impossible to forget. By stepping aside for one moment, one runs a fearful risk of being forgotten; a thousand years would be too short a time for him to forget.

The months rolled on.

One autumn day, when the sun in its splendor fell caressingly upon the placid bosom of the "Father of Waters," a gentleman and lady crossed the gang-way of a stately vessel, and took their way with hurried step to the mansion among the magnolias. Their faces were browned as if from long exposure to a tropical sun. It was the long lost merchant and his wife returning to father and son; returning safe from the fury of wind and wave after having suffered ship-wreck on the coast of an uninhabited island. Fortunately, little goods and few lives were lost. The strong chest which contained the valuable papers and wealth of the merchant was cast up on the shore by the sea and recovered.

When they reached the house, judge of their disappointment and pain on finding it occupied by strangers. The merchant asked no questions and was wise enough not to reveal his name. But he resolved that, if possible, he would buy back the old home again before the sun set; then

he would find his father if he were yet alive.

Leaving his wife at a hotel, he went immediately to the office of the old lawyer who had for many years been the legal adviser of his father. The merchant was oppressed with many fears. He was almost afraid to meet the old attorney on account of the news he might be compelled to hear.

On presenting himself, he was immediately recognized and greeted as one returned from the dead. Soon each was in possession of the story of the other. The merchant's heart swelled for joy, when he learned that his father and son were alive and well.

Steps were immediately taken to buy the old home and settle other claims by which property had gone out of the family name. The lawyer had kept trace of all the slaves that had been sold, and at once, on the expressed wish of the merchant, he set about buying them back.

Before the sun set that night, the old home with its beautiful grove of magno-

lias, and known as "Idlefield," was again in the family which had so long owned and loved it. Arrangements were made to have everything restored as quickly as possible to its former order.

The following morning the merchant set out in his own private pleasure boat to find his father.

* * * *

On returning from the adventure with the panther Oliver carefully concealed every evidence of his hurt, before reaching home. He feared that should his grandfather see the blood, he would be needlessly alarmed.

Supper had long been prepared when he arrived and the two old men were awaiting his return.

"You must have had a long tramp of it, my boy," said the grandfather.

"We have been far into the hills," said Oliver, taking a seat as far as possible from the light.

"You may serve up the supper, Ag.

Oliver must be hungry after his long walk."

The old servant bustled about, attending to his duties.

The pain of the wound on Oliver's breast, by reason of inattention, was beginning to be severe.

"Grandpa."

The old man turned quickly and looked keenly at the boy. Oliver had become so much a part of his very life, that he had learned to detect the slightest shade of feeling expressed in word, look, or manner. He felt, rather than heard, the slight shade of anxiety in the loved voice.

"What is it, my son?"

"You must not be alarmed, grandpa. I received a very slight hurt to-day."

"O, my child! I hope it is only slight."

Oliver now began to expose the wound. The grandfather tried to help but his hand trembled too much. Uncle Ag, with frightened face, but a hand almost as gentle as a mother's might have been, laid bare the ugly gash on the tender shoulder and breast.

“De Lawd hab mussy!” exclaimed the old servant.

“My poor, poor boy!” exclaimed the grandfather.

The hurt was not serious but, judging by the manner in which the two old men hurried around and marking the look of concern, one would have supposed Oliver's life to be in immediate danger. The wound was soon dressed by the ready hands of Uncle Ag.

“How did it happen?” the grandfather asked.

“The panther sprang upon me.”

“The panther! I did not suppose there were any to be found in this vicinity. I fervently thank God that your life was saved. The panther is a fierce beast. I wish you would tell me all about it.”

Oliver related the adventure. Considering the honorable and brave share he had in the dangerous encounter, his own name was little mentioned though the name of Nig was coupled with all the praise that he could give it.

The next Monday, Timothy came to

school on crutches, a rude pair which his father had made for him. That a marked change had come over the boy, any one could see.

At noon, when all had left the room except Mr. Sumley and himself, Timothy hobbled up to the master's desk.

"Mr. Sumley, I know that what I'm a goin' to tell you now will make you hate me, but after all that's happened, I can't do without tellin' you no longer."

The boy was much excited. The master suspected what was coming but thought best not to aid him by any questions.

"You may be mistaken," he said. "Perhaps I shall not hate you, but may respect you the more. I shall be sure to do so if you have that to tell me which is true and manly."

"I didn't want to tell on myself that evenin' out there in the road. Nig made me," the boy desperately blurted out. "An' sence Oliver stood between me and that painter as would of eat me up if he hadn't, I aint felt good at all a thinkin' how oncommon selfish I've been."

The tears were in the boy's dark eyes now. The master saw that a chord had been set to vibrating in the boy's heart, whose music was likely to awaken the slumbering germs of manhood.

"I have known about this all along," said the master, "and so far from hating you for what you have said, I would not have thought well of you had you done otherwise. I think you have now acted in a manly manner. You are now free to go upon the playground when you please. I feel sure that I can now trust you to help maintain the honor of our school."

Timothy was pleasantly surprised. He found the dreaded task of confessing more easy than he had expected. He found that it is always easy to do right if one goes about it earnestly. It is trying to make wrong seem right that is hard. Nothing is so royal as loyalty to truth. He limped to the playground carrying a clear conscience in his bosom—something he had rarely done before. He was heartily welcomed.

Oliver was not at school that day. His grandfather could not bear the thought of being away from him while his hurt was still painful.

That evening, Nellie carried a note to Oliver. It was a very queer looking note. It was written on a very soiled fragment of copy-book and read as follows:

deer Oliver I am sorry you got hurt. I am
sorry I let you be made stay in I ought of told
sooner. Ive bin awful selfish I hope youl fergive
me
Tim Snideby.

Oliver was astonished and pleased on reading the note. It gave him a much higher opinion of the boy whom he had little more than pitied before.

“We all missed you to-day, Oliver,” said Nellie.

“I am glad to know that I was missed. I think I shall not get to school to-morrow either,” said the boy, pleased to see his little friend.

“Does your wound hurt you so much?”

“It is not that, Nellie. Grandpa does

not like to let me go unless I am entirely well. The hurt does not pain me very much. It was only a scratch."

"O, Oliver, my father and everybody else says you are a hero! It was a brave thing to stand up before that awful panther! I could not bear to touch it even after it was dead. I don't see how you could do it."

"I did only what was right. I could not leave even an enemy, much less a schoolmate, in such a terrible place. I did nothing more than many other boys would have done."

"O, Oliver! I think it was brave and manly. I do not know of any one else at all who would have been so brave. My father says the neighborhood ought to be proud of you."

Oliver was in confusion. He could not think of any suitable reply to make, so stood silent. Of a truth, Nellie's simple, warm praise was enough to abash almost any modest boy. Her complete artlessness, however, relieved her words from the appearance of flattery. Though confused,

the generous boy was more pleased than he would care to own.

CHAPTER VIII

NELLIE DIRECTS A STRANGER TO THE ROBERTAINE COTTAGE

A few evenings after Nellie brought the letter to Oliver, which he answered in a very polite manner and returned by the same hand, a well-dressed, fine-looking gentlemen stopped at Mr. Neff's gate. He inquired if they "could kindly direct him to the home of an old gentleman named Godfrey Robertaine."

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Neff. "Mr. Robertaine lives but a short distance from here. Nellie, my little daughter, shall run along and show you the way."

Thanking the good woman, the man followed the little girl.

"Are you much acquainted with the Robertaine family, my child?" said the man.

“I am well acquainted with Oliver,” answered the child.

“Oh! you know Oliver, then, do you?”

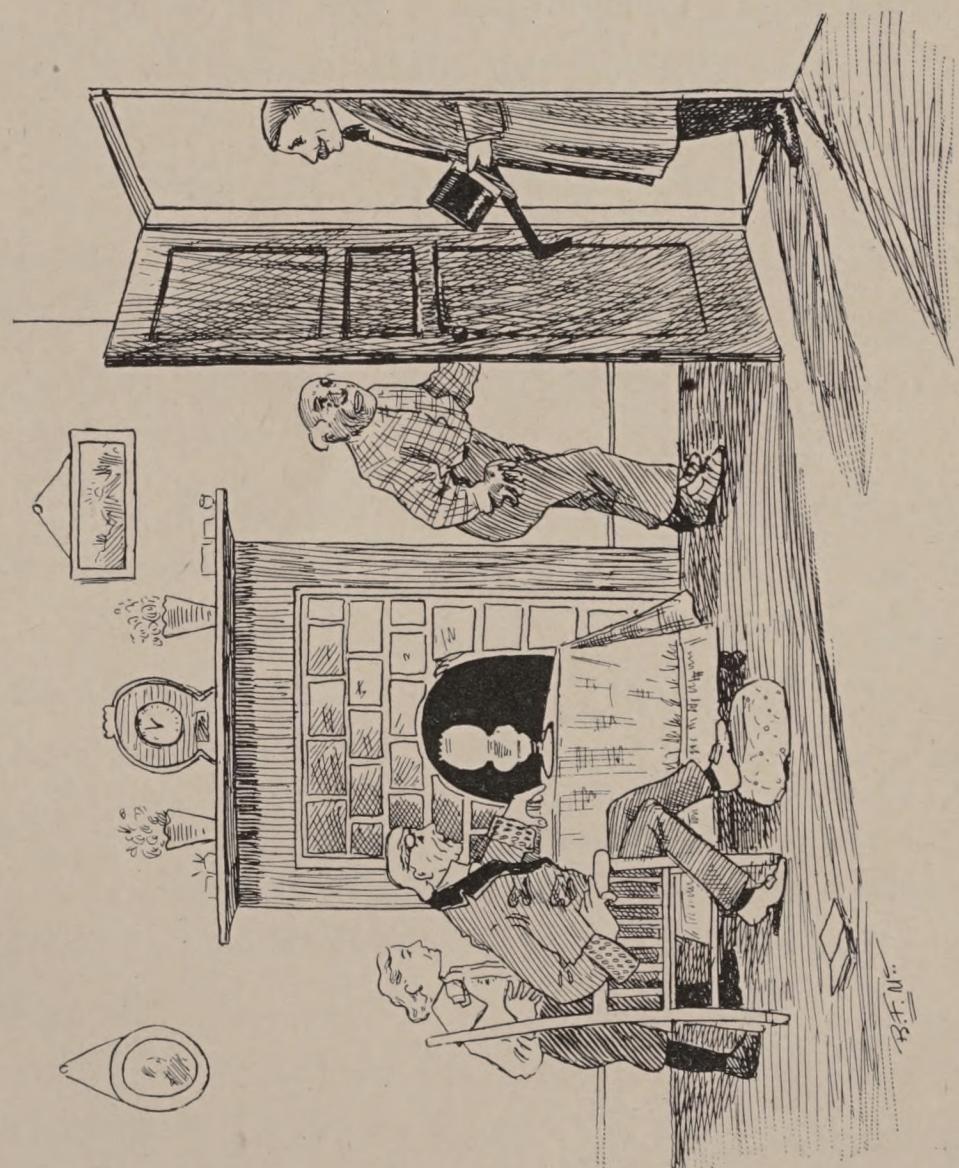
“Everybody knows Oliver, sir. Why, he’s the boy that wasn’t afraid to stand up before the panther.”

Nellie spoke with spirit. A pleased light shown in the gentleman’s splendid eyes. On being requested, the little girl told the story. The face of her listener betrayed the more than common interest he took in the story of Oliver’s heroism. As the story drew to a close, they neared the cottage.

The evening shadows were beginning to fall as they approached.

The three inmates of the cottage were employed as usual; the grandfather reading, Oliver at his lessons, Uncle Ag busy with household cares.

Suddenly Uncle Ag paused. He stood in fixed attention. He thought he heard a step which he recognized. He was almost sure he knew the step. A knock sounded at the door. With trembling limbs which almost refused to support



THE RETURN OF OLIVER'S FATHER.

him, Uncle Ag approached the door and threw it open. There stood the young merchant of the great house among the magnolias of the Crescent City.

“Marse Oliver! Bless de Lawd!”

“My son! My son!”

“O, my father! My father!”

Uncle Ag, the grandfather and Oliver exclaimed almost in the same breath.

In glad joy, the frail old man and the bright-haired boy were clasped in the strong, loving arms of the returned son and father. After the long bitter years what supreme happiness to meet again! To a broken-hearted father, the sea had given back a son; to a broken-hearted son, the sea had given back a father.

Unless his pen were a sunbeam, his ink a tear, who could describe that reunion. It was something pathetic and beautiful to see the white head of the father bowed on the manly breast of his son. Care and poverty should not any more distress the dear old heart. And with what a world of tenderness was Oliver clasped in his father’s arms. Nor

was Uncle Ag forgotten. He had settled into a chair, a look of perfect happiness glowing in his old face. When the greeting of those nearer to him was over, the young man turned to the old servant. Uncle Ag had been almost as a father to him and his wife, and had been his nurse.

“Bless de Lawd! Bless de Lawd!” cried the old servant, his arms around the man he had loved as a son. “I knowed you’d come back! I knowed you’d come back to yer old Uncle Ag! I tolle Marse Godfrey you’d come an’ now you’ve come! Bless de Lawd!”

Nellie had stood all this time looking upon the scene as though she could hardly understand the situation. She readily comprehended the fact, though, that Oliver’s father had come. This was enough to give her great pleasure. Once she had asked Oliver something about his father and the poor boy had burst into tears. Nellie had thought of the circumstance a good many times. It had always made her tenderly sorry for him.

Godfrey Robertaine, all the stately dig-

nity gone out of his fine face, the tears of joy running down his cheeks, approached the little girl.

“God bless little Nellie, who showed my son the way to his father,” he said, laying his trembling hand on her head.

“I’m glad Oliver’s father has come. It is an awful thing to have no father,” said the little girl, earnestly. “But it is late now and I must go home.”

“It is dark,” said Oliver. “I will go with you.”

The two went away together and Oliver soon returned. He could not long stay away from his new-found parent.

“My son,” said the grandfather, “I am now going to ask a question which fear has kept me from asking before. You have not yet told us of Oliver’s mother, dear Margery.”

“Margery is alive and well. She sits to-night in the dear old home among the magnolias and thinks the time long till she shall see her son,” answered the young man.

“O, father, let us go to her at once!” cried Oliver.

“But, my son, the old home is in the hands of strangers. I gave it up months ago. The slaves are scattered. We three are alone left to welcome you,” exclaimed the grandfather, bitterly.

“I am glad to tell you, father, that ‘Idlefield’ is now the unincumbered property of Godfrey Robertaine, who so long owned and loved it. Furthermore, everything is fast being restored just as he left it.”

Tears of silent joy were flowing down the old grandfather’s cheeks. Oliver sat by his father’s side, his father’s arm about him, his fair blue eyes fixed upon his father’s face.

“The fortune you consigned to the mercy of wind and wave,” the son continued, “has more than doubled. Henceforth, nothing but peace and happiness need come into your life. Uncle Ag, listen—I have that to tell which you will like to hear. The household of dear ‘Idlefield’ is being restored as fast as pos-

sible. When you return home, you will be greeted by all your old companions. What do you think of that, old friend?"

"Uncle Ag t'ink bless de Lawd, Marse Oliver! My ole heart 'mos' too full ob joy to stan' any mo'. I 'spect it bust clean wide open if you tells me any mo', Marse Oliver."

Hearts were too full that night for much sleep. They sat up till a late hour reviewing the events of the past. The merchant gave an account of his shipwreck, the life on the wild island, the manner in which they were rescued, which caused Oliver's eyes to shine with interest. Then the events which took place at home after he had sailed were told. Thus the time flew fast. Before they realized it the hour was late.

Because of the dear mother who anxiously awaited her son and because of the yearning desire to see the old home again, it was decided to go as soon as possible. They began that night to prepare.

The next morning Oliver went to the school to get his books. The news of his

father's arrival had preceded him. By some means, too, it had become known that his father was very rich. His schoolmates gathered around him in genuine sorrow on hearing that he was to leave that afternoon.

To own the truth, Oliver did not turn his back on the humble school-house without regret. Here he had passed through some trying experiences. From being the least respected and appreciated he had grown to be regarded with great favor. Not without a sense of pleasure are such reflections borne in upon the mind. After all, people love the scenes which try their integrity.

That afternoon when they arrived at the river side where they were to embark in the merchant's small steamboat which had brought him from home, Oliver's schoolmates were all there to see him off. Mr. Sumley was there, too.

The boat was named "Margery," in compliment to Oliver's mother, and was used for private purposes of pleasure. Oliver had taken many a ride on the

beautiful craft. Like other possessions of the Robertaine estate, it had been given up when misfortune came, but it was one of the very first things recovered. The sight of the "Margery" was one of the first pleasant surprises of the many in store for Oliver and his grandfather. As the boat steamed gracefully up to the platform Uncle Ag was delighted to see that some of his old companions were managing it.

Oliver shook hands with each of his friends before stepping on the boat. Mr. Sumley's farewell was full of good advice and good wishes, though he said it was quite unnecessary to advise one who had lived so well as Oliver had. It was hard for Oliver to leave Nig. The generous hearted, impulsive fellow had won a very warm place in his heart. Partings between children are of few words but, oh, how full of feeling! Probably Nig had never in his life felt so solemn as now.

Oliver took Nellie's hand last. Little Nellie did not conceal the feelings with

which she parted for the last time, as she supposed, from the boy who had been so gentle and so much her friend. Oliver said something at the last, though what it was he never could remember. It is a kind of awkward thing, after all, to part from those we love.

The boat moved away. Oliver was gone. His friends stood on the bank waving hands and handkerchiefs. As the pretty boat glided away, they could see Oliver standing in the stern, his bright hair blowing in the wind. At last a bend in the river was reached and the fair, bright head disappeared.

Mr. Sumley and his pupils went slowly and thoughtfully back to the school-house. Somehow the school was very quiet for the rest of the day. And the master's voice was so soft and gentle. Even the song of the birds which floated in at the open windows seemed harsh and out of place. When recess came, not one went out to play but all gathered in groups about the master and talked in subdued tones, as children will

talk sometimes with their mother by the pale fire light after the evening shadows have fallen.

During a long life the master carried out his "kindness policy," and had the pleasure, in after years, of seeing Timothy Snideby become a man of considerable learning and usefulness.

Mr. Sumley rose gradually into public favor, filling many important positions in his chosen profession. He finally located in a beautiful town on the Ohio and the charming lady who presided over his pretty home was once the fairest daughter of Maxtone's Point. And the two halves of the little shell which Susie had picked up on the walk from the river that beautiful moonlight night still fresh in Mr. Sumley's memory, lay side by side in his parlor.

It must be confessed that Oliver turned away from the associations of Maxtone's Point, especially from those in which the friendship of Nellie and Nig were concerned, with greater reluctance than would be expected of a boy on his way

to meet a long lost mother. He resolved in his heart that he would sometime come again.

The trip home was very pleasant but quite uneventful.

At the wharf in New Orleans where the "Margery" usually anchored, a colored boy sat with his feet dangling lazily in the water. He was one of the servants of the Robertaine's, posted there by his mistress to bring her the earliest news of the arrival of her husband's boat. The boy was seen there for several days.

One day the usually listless fellow sprang suddenly to his feet and gazed eagerly up the river. Sure enough, there was the "Margery" gracefully approaching. The boy waited just long enough to make out two gray-haired old men and a bright-haired boy. Then he darted away, almost bursting with the news he had to tell. Nearly breathless from his run the boy tumbled into the room of his mistress.

"Marse Godfrey, Marse Oliver an' Un-

cle Ag, dey's all a comin'," panted the boy.

"Did you see them, Happy?"

"Seed 'em wid dese berry two eyes, Missus."

"And was little Oliver there, too?" Anxiously inquired the mother.

"He big Oliver now, Missus. He dere sho' but he big boy now—mos' as big as Happy."

The words of the simple boy brought the fond mother to a recollection of the long time that had flown by since her eyes had rested upon her son. She placed herself by a window to watch for her loved ones.

In a little while the gate was flung open and a handsome boy with bright hair came flying up the wide walk. She could not restrain herself but ran to meet him. O, the sweet joy! Long lost mother and long lost son were once more in each other's arms.

Soon the other loved ones were met and greeted. The old home was home once more. The sorrows of the past were

no more remembered. The present was golden.

Uncle Ag found all his former companions restored to their old home. To say that these simple creatures were happy and contented would but faintly describe their excessive joy.

That evening, the re-united family walked about the grounds of dear 'Idlefield.' Their hearts were at peace. The happiest family in all the great Crescent City was to be found that night under the whispering magnolias.

THE END.

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